

# PM: Don't be pushed by West

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has cautioned East Asian countries against being pushed by the West into instituting sudden reforms, because the results can be damaging rather than favourable.

"Sudden changes in the way of doing anything are disruptive," the Prime Minister said, adding that no matter how good the reforms, their instant adoption would bring about damage and not yield the expected results.

"We should therefore always be circumspect when adopting new ways of doing things," he said in a keynote address at the Asia Economic Summit here yesterday.

He cited unbridled deregulation as among the moves which need not necessarily benefit the people.

As an example, he said, the airlines industry was doing well until it was deregulated, which led to airline companies cutting corners and lowering their standards in service and even in the maintenance of their aircraft in order to survive.

Several air crashes, he said, were attributed to low maintenance standards and many good airlines went bankrupt, creating social problems.

He said that even prior to the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, practically all the airlines were losing money due to cut-throat competition.

Hitting out at the industrialised countries for insisting that East Asian countries

adopt certain "prescribed business practices," Dr Mahathir said the suddenness of the imposition of these stringent rules and regulations had made recovery of corporations very difficult.

Indeed, he said, many East Asian corporations were unable to recover and have had to be sold off to foreigners.

Dr Mahathir said that on the surface, the reforms prescribed by the West looked good, but how and when they should be adopted should be

left to the respective East Asian countries to decide.

"The countries of East Asia are culturally very different from each other and so are their business practices.

"It is not necessary that reforms should take only one form because there should be other ways which can make business and economic management acceptable and yet not be so disruptive," he added.

He also said the loss of self-respect and self-confidence in East Asian countries had ham-

pered their recovery from the recent financial crisis.

Through Western propaganda, he said, these countries were made to feel guilty for their past practices when rebuilding their economies.

"They believe that to gain respect they must do everything the way the Western countries are supposed to do.

"Even when they discover that in fact their detractors were actually far from practising what they preach, they cannot bring themselves to do the right thing," he added.

Dr Mahathir suggested that countries of East Asia should initiate an East Asian solution to regional and world economic problems.

The countries, he said, had sufficient clout and had shown a capacity to contribute much towards the wisdom of the human race.

It would be a pity, he said, if the voice of East Asia was stifled or so distrusted that the countries of the region might not speak to each other without the presence of people from outside the region.